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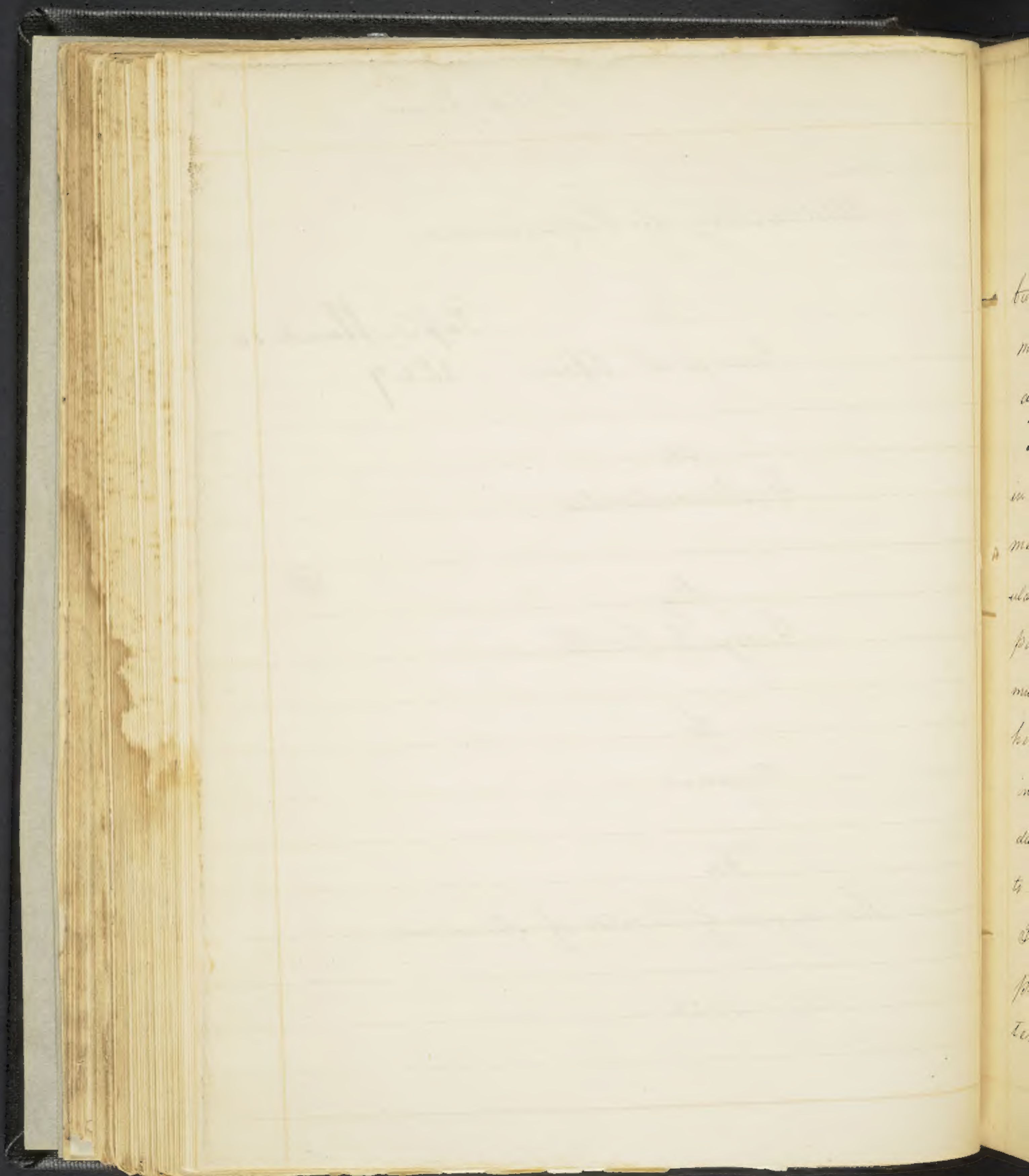
on
Gastro-enteritis

By
George J. Smith

of
Virginia

For
The degree of Doctor of Medicine

1829



Remarks on Gastroenteritis

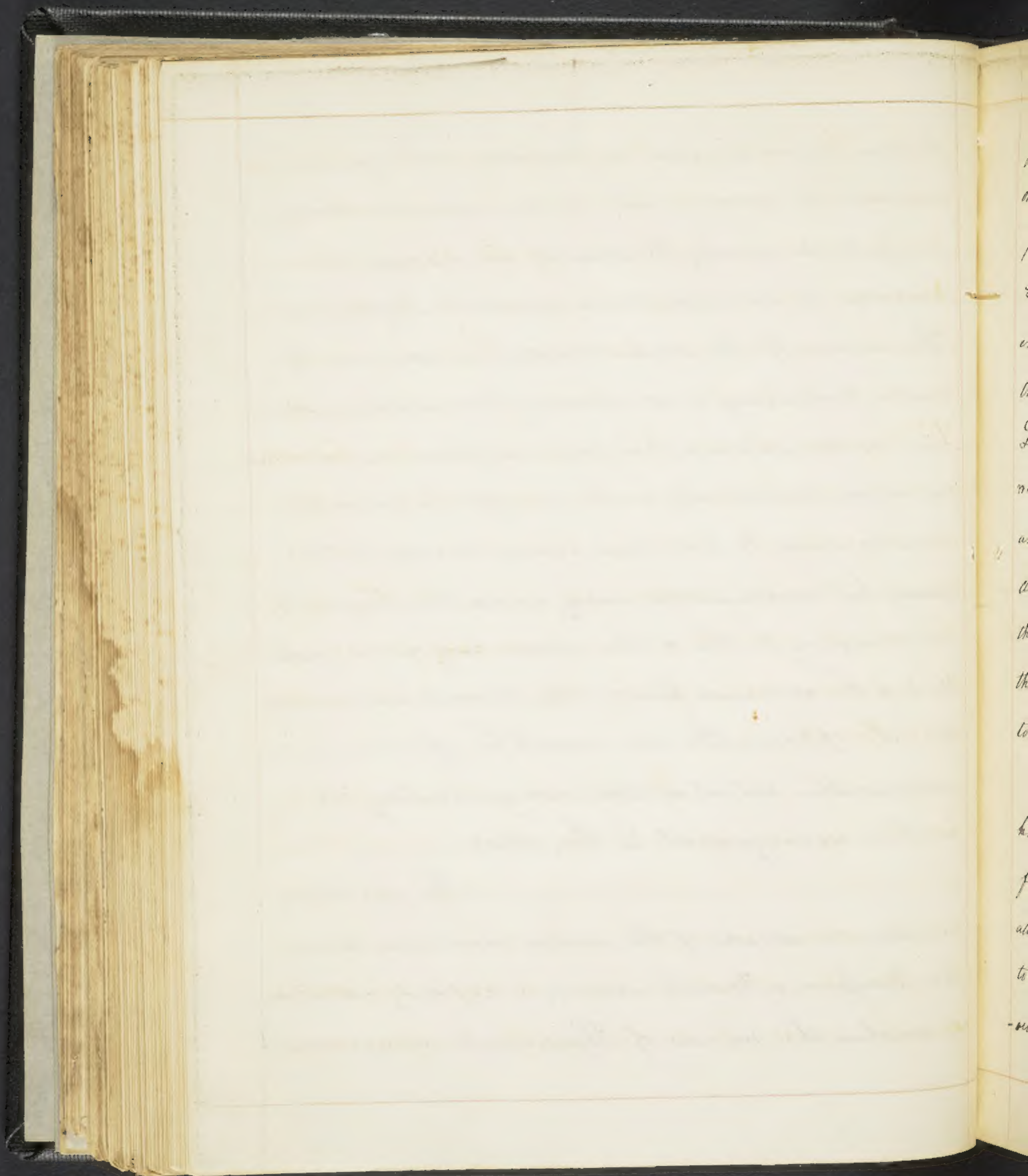
Medicine at the present period appears to be advancing in improvement and innovation with rapid strides but however auspicious the present prospect of improvement may be, there yet no doubt, remain, many difficulties to remove and many false theories to detect. Autopsical investigations, by which obscurities might, in a great degree, be removed from the practice of medicine, have hitherto been too much neglected particularly by American physicians; though for a few years past, pathological Anatomy has been attended to with much more spirit and enterprise than formerly, and hence we see, that medicine is daily advancing in improvement, and the true nature of many diseases discovered, which were at one time considered to be both obscure and terrific in their character.

Indeed, the great difficulty under which the country practitioner has laboured, or in other words, that panick terror, so prevalent in a rural practice relative to—



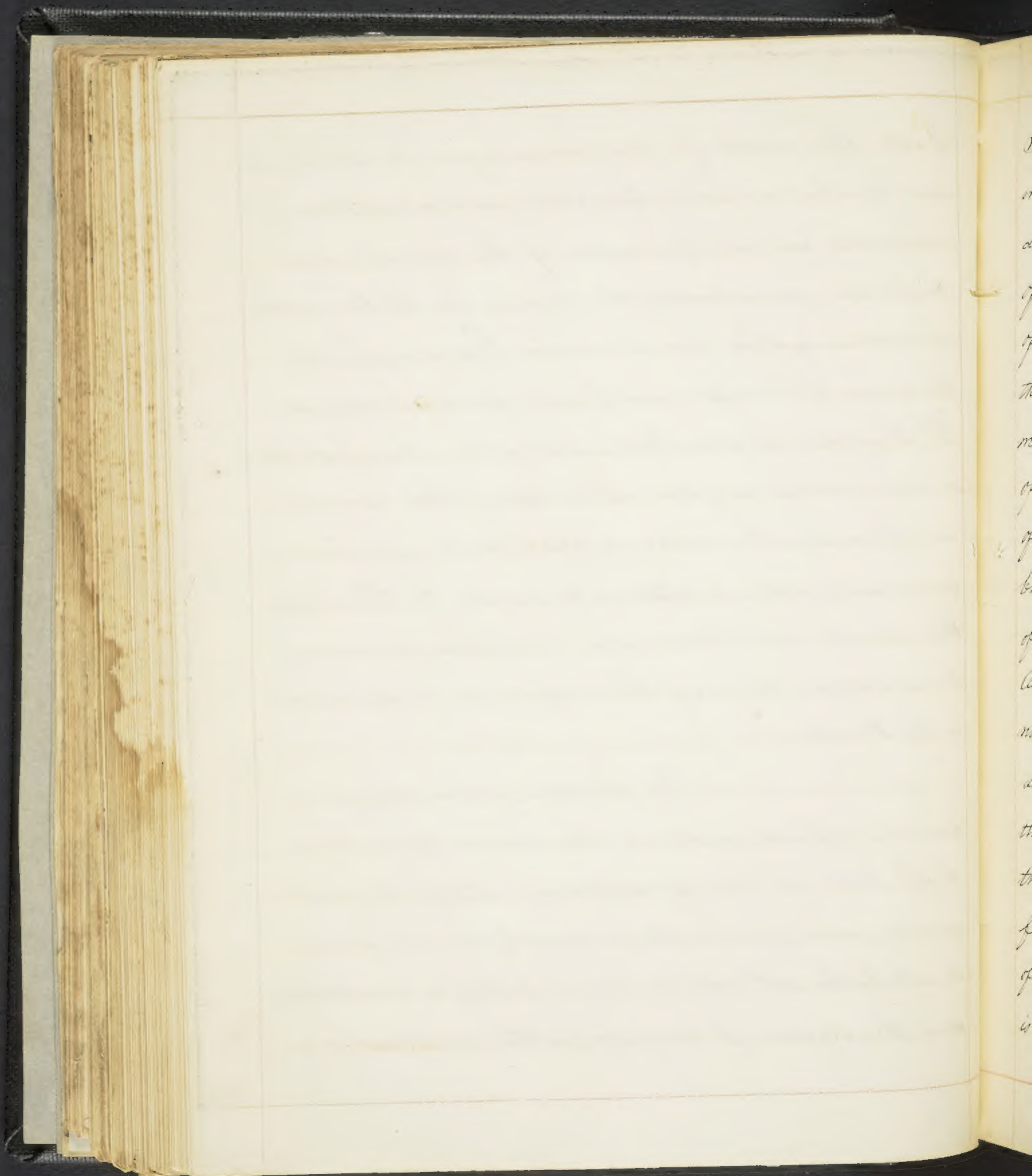
Autopsies begin to yield in proportion to the gradual
declension of ignorance and popular superstition, thereby
giving to the country Practitioner in a degree the
advantage of one situated in a public Infirmary.
The attention of the medical world has been recently
invited, particularly to all diseases of the mucous membranes,
and as the stomach has for a long time been considered
an organ principally liable to suffer in fevers, the
attention seems to have been mainly directed to that
viscus; but investigations daily evince the propriety
of attending to the whole alimentary canal; in fact
such is the connexion between the stomach and bowels,
that it appears, the one cannot be affected to any
considerable extent, without communicating its
morbid derangement to the other.

The new theory
relative to diseases of the mucous membranes termed
the Broussain or French doctrine, is certainly calculated
to awaken the minds of Physicians, to many important

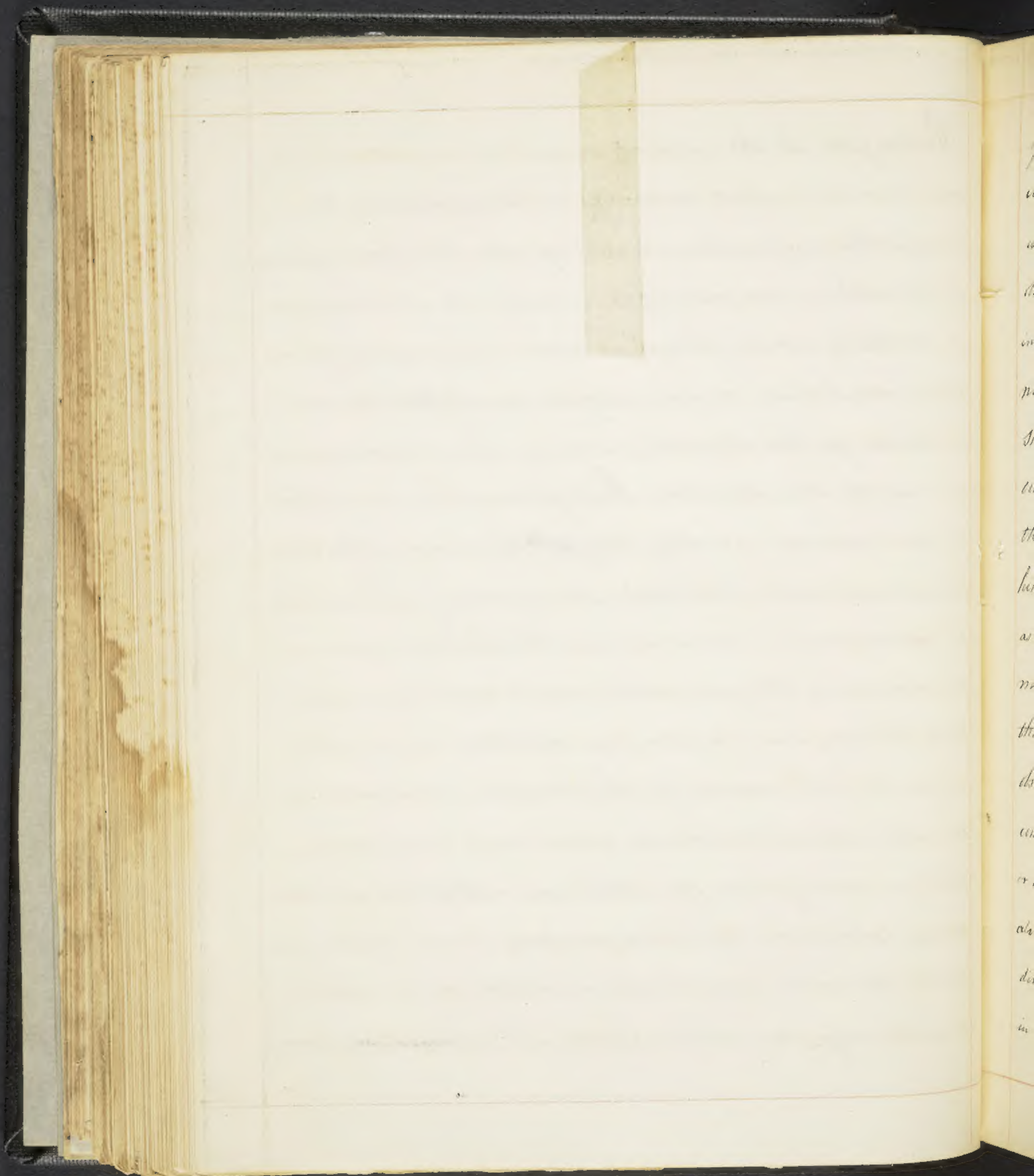


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facts. The ideas of Broussais in regard to all diseases
or all of what are termed Idiopathic diseases, consisting
primarily in an inflammation of the stomach and
Duodenum, are certainly not original, for the same were
entertained by some few American Physicians, before
the name of Broussais was heard of in America, as
D^{rs} Chapman, Miller, Seeta, and some others; but while
we claim our prerogative in this respect, that candour
and liberality, the wellknown characteristic of an
American people, compel us to admit, that many of
their valuable contributions and, particularly for some of
the improved doctrines of the day, we are much indebted
to the French.

The attention of the profession
has not only been invited to the mucous tissues, but we
find that all the tissues claim a large share of
attention; indeed no method seems better calculated
to dispel the mist which has for so long a time overshadowed
the science of medicine, as the one assumed by



Pathologists at the present period. As my intention is
 only to make a few remarks on Gastro-enteritis, to
 discuss the comparative merits of the Broussaisian system
 of practice, and wishing to indulge in that degree
 of partiality, which should be done in an essay of
 this kind, I shall confine myself merely to the mucous
 membrane of the stomach, as being the primary seat
 of nearly all diseases. Impressed at an early period
 of my medical investigations with the ideas of Doctors
 Chapman and Jackson, in regard to the nature
 of fevers, which occurred in the Pennsylvania
 Almshouse in the year, 1826-7. which was to me, indeed
 novel, I have since devoted my attention in a great
 degree to all diseases of the mucous membranes of
 the stomach and bowels, and can truly say,
 that in nearly all of what are called Idiopathic
 fevers, appear to consist primarily in an inflammation
 of the stomach and duodenum, and the stomach
 is certainly adapted from its extraordinary power



of symptoms, to extend the disease to other viscera, and as
itself most liable to sustain the burden of it, and to
arrange the most proper management. I must
add that in my remarks on this subject it is not my
intention to travel through a routine of symptoms or
notice the various causes as laid down by writers, but
shall promiscuously state what has come under my
own observation respecting the disease. In looking over
the writings of the late H. C. Allen, I was struck with
his ideas respecting the nature and cause of fevers, &
as they correspond so nearly with the doctrine now so
much in vogue, I beg leave to insert them. He believes
that fever depends on some primary local affection, and
observes, that, "The morbid cause here named scrofula, whether
contagion or miasmata; whose action is of a pyrexial
& other noxious power operating in a similar way appears
always to act on the same principle, it stimulates
directly or indirectly a particular action of the system
in a less or greater degree; hence I observe, that fever



is originally local, and though in its progress it may
be extended over the whole body, it is an effect of
systemic action, and is a manifestation of the influence
of disease to a particular part. If a severe
infection of the abdomen and transfer the stomach
the range of a localized disease, which by the reason
will produce a train of fever, convulsions, and
inflammation of the liver, and various gangrene &c.
In this case, the fever and convulsions, are usually
symptomatic of the disease and, by attending
primarily to these, and overlooking the injury
we should act as in common febrile diseases,
where the force and rapidity of the action,
the symptoms are deemed of more importance
than the local disease which inflames,
irritates and produces a vital organ.

There are

few of an infectious kind, having a
primary local seat in the stomach ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{liver} ~~and~~ ^{and}



is called a gastroenteritis. Here I may be asked
if some fever is not out of a simple character,
without any local inflammation. and if they too
can be called a gastroenteritis. In this I would reply
that some fevers exist without any positive
inflammation, though a great degree of irritability
generally exists in the stomach and duodenum,
even running into an inflammation, although in that
the fever might be considered of the same nature
as the other differing merely in grade. I then
make nearly all fevers a Gastroenteritis; though
differing in degree. I shall first confine myself to
that form of a continued nature, and mention
the treatment and chiefly to that form of
a remittent or intermittent nature. The most pro-
minent symptoms of the continued form occurring to
the death, are the following. The liver with
some exceptions is of an green character the pulse
small quick and hard the tongue purple and



very red around the edges, but frequently even
head hot and painful, heat tender and
warm in the epigastric region, & sometimes
tenderness and pain of the epigastric region
is a symptom of the disease, yet these though
generally present invariably absent. I have seen
many cases, cases too which nearly always prove
fatal, where no tenderness, pain or uneasiness
was discerned even from the most severe
pressure applied over the whole abdominal
tract. I have also mentioned as an invariable
symptom, & amongst the living, the cessation
of the breath and exhalation, the most ob-
vious case - was conceived to be a sufficient evidence
of the disease, for in some cases I have known no
great arterial disturbance, and a pulse observed, yet
the least pain from the above symptoms - will
appear that the case is inflammatory, and the
disturbance is not at all more common than the





a similar effect would be given as would always result
in the case of the lungs. But the fact is commonly given with
a view to bring away much discharge and become
a moderate given with the most of the lungs, as seen
that movement, then the effect is more immediately
on the liver, and is related to a heart's disorder.
namely, it is common and moves the internal
secretion of the lungs in some dark discharge.
It is spoken by Dr. Samuel Jackson in the history
that these discharges are not brown, but a more
be a secretion from the inflamed mucous mem-
brane of the bronchi. This he has, particularly
observed in the many anatomical dissections
he has made, and has always found that in
an abnormal condition of the membrane there
would be a darkening arising from the internal secretion
and on removal in a normal condition, no such
secretion could be found. This may in a measure
account for what is called, 'reducing' these dark discharges.



11.
I have frequently observed, that when from a melan-
cholic the stools move be nearly natural in
colour from a single use of calomel they would
become dark. This fact I mentioned not long since
to Dr Jackson and found that he had repeatedly
observed the same. Whether calomel acts as an irrit-
ant in the intestinal vessels & causes a more
intense secretion or whether it is a chemical
effect I cannot undertake to say. I would not from
this be unduly alarmed as concerning the use of calomel as
always a harmful medicine but like every thing else
it is good in its proper place or in other words
when judiciously administered. I was suffered from
a severe attack of enteritis and calomel &
other drastic purgatives were given till I continued
at the point of last 24 grains. The second day
passed and passed the crisis, at length
subsided a continuation. In this condition I
experienced ^{some} relief from the use of cold water



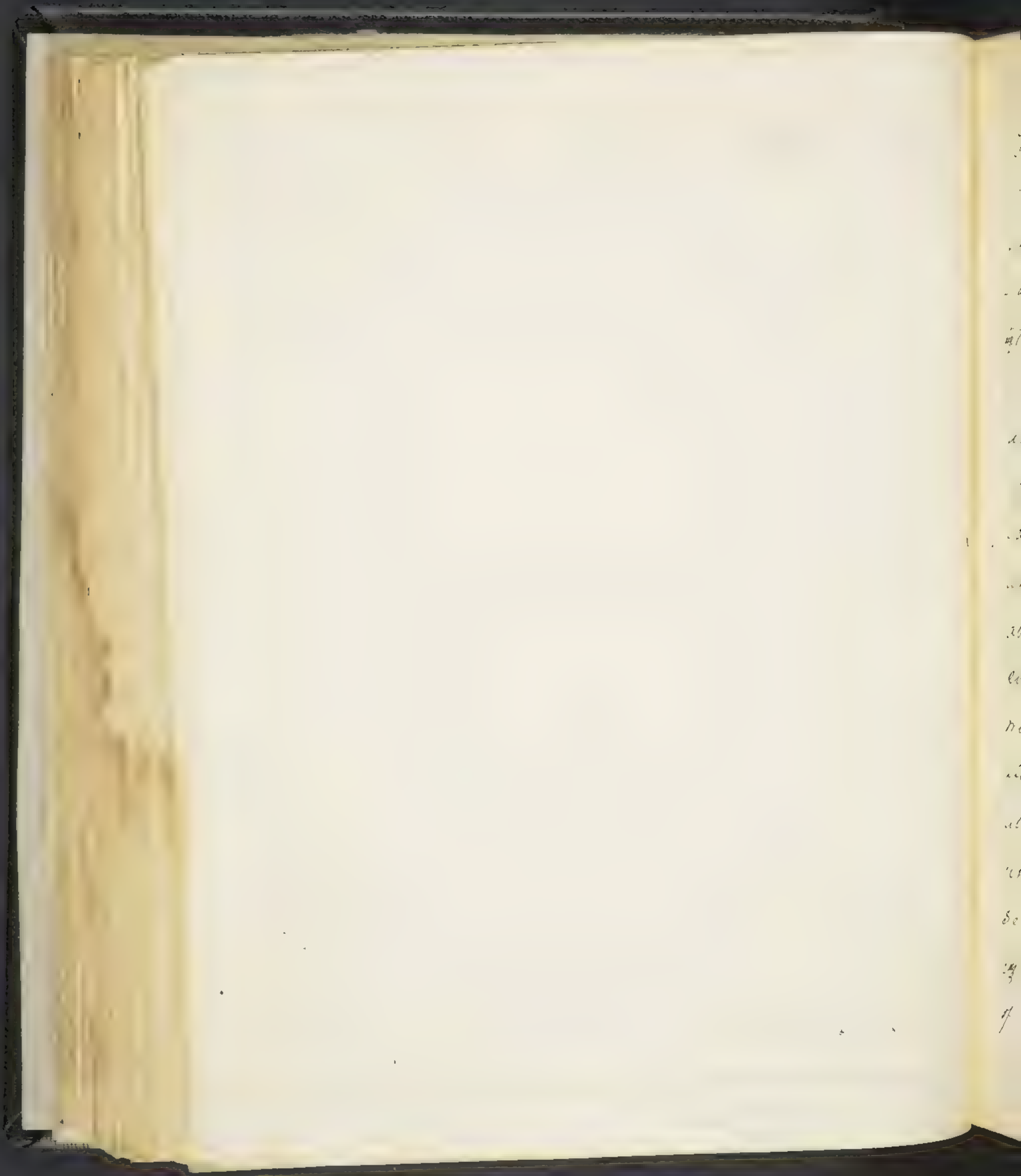
than from any other cause. These are occurring
abundantly when men are in the
advance many such cases were met
for collecting my father to the conclusion
a length of time before he died. It is
stated that in cases of this nature the
treatment mostly successful was affixing
warm hair roots were put on commonly
the case the hair was evenly shaven &
was made to grow constantly as before, till the
head became permanently cold. A few
men refused and the hair refused to
grow until one winter in 1841 in which
one man on the side the hair was
shaved by the medical students or by common
after general shaving was applied to
a sufficient extent to great debility
in cups or leeches was resorted to. Healing
in most cases was up disagreeable and



more instant in its effects than cupping
but whether the one or the other was resorted to
it was invariably resorted to, to push their use to
a complete and decided impression on the
system. In truth it is as much the duty of a
physician to sit by the bedside, and maintain
the effect of local depletion, as to attend to the
system in cases of abstraction of blood from
the arm. and I am myself, no doubt but
the success of success in topical bloodletting
is generally owing ^{to this neglect} to this important and
ill-managed duty. It is very frequently the case
that the country practitioners, seeing the use
of topical depletion, having never witnessed
any good effects from it. They commonly
direct six or eight leeches to be applied
and when they have a cause to cure, not more
than two or three pills of blood are given
when, if inflammation exist, not less than



from fifty to eighty million of the
common American deer. It may indeed
be a general rule, he remarked, that those
beasts who are innocent in their consumption
and most contrary, not in their appetites, that
such things have given them any, a partial
trial since many valuable remedies are
incidentally either hurtful or useless, when
perhaps if managed correctly might
be used as an invaluable remedy in the
case of many diseases. When he first recited
the name, the audience was silent, & much
noise would have sometimes arisen in the
water stage though generally the indication
was of a character so remote to the east, &
west of their use. The words to be a simple
cold water Lemonade from Indian materials.
Hot, & cold water, rice water, and other things
of a simple and digestible nature



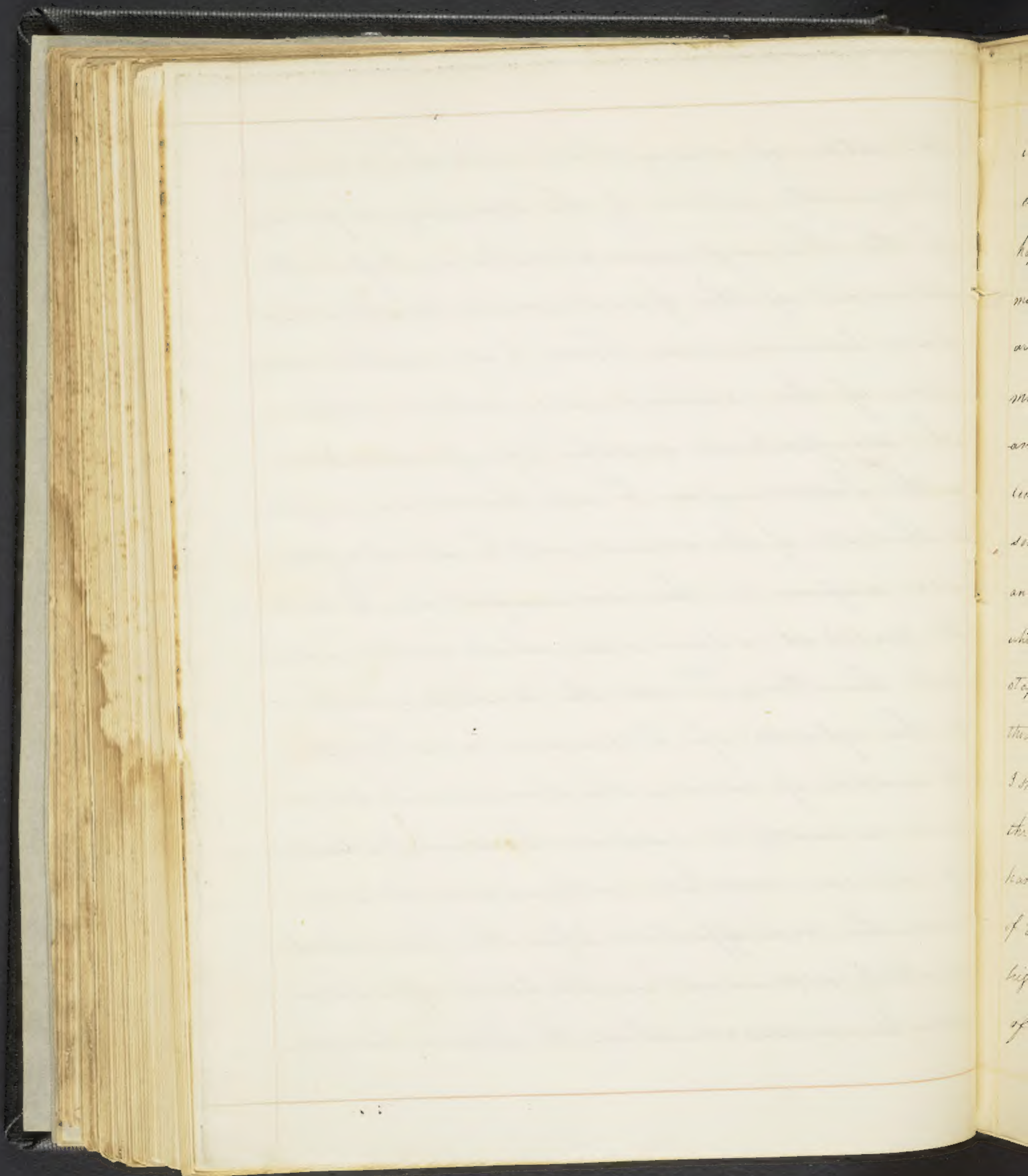
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That simple fever sometimes exists which remains
parasitic to a certain action & would be very
unwilling to leave it. It consequently, over autumn
-al fevers, and several others in a remittent or inter-
mittent form which in their commencement
is of a simple character & unattended by
any local inflammation. The symptoms
in this form of disease are pale tongue, fever
which after a slight chill, is of a quick
and irritable not hard or full tendency &
about the Epigastric region. In the very
commencement of such fever, purgatives
will frequently operate well, when a purgation
abate fever, equalize the circulation, and be
attended with much advantage. For by
whatever means the circulation is equalized
and whether by internal or external means
if the cure is accomplished. In conclusion
of my paper, I would state in a concluding manner



11
ulceration as a sort of excrement. The same
to believe is a much more frequent occurrence than has
generally been supposed by physicians; indeed with
the exception of chronic Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Haemorrhoids
and one or two others, its existence is doubted by many
even to this day notwithstanding the daily observation
of the same, when affections of the bowels are referred
to about the rectum. The parts of the intestine most
liable to ulcerate, appear to be the Sigmoid, Sigmoid
Colon, the end of the Sigmoid, and of the Colon,
commencement of the Sigmoid, of the Sigmoid, Sigmoid
and the end of the Sigmoid. However it appears, that
the intestine is not all over all parts liable
to ulcerate. It has lately been observed by
an English friend physician, that the parts
of the Sigmoid and Sigmoid, are most liable to
ulcerate, and as the Sigmoid, he is sure
to give the name of Sigmoid, or Sigmoid. The parts
of the Sigmoid, is confirmed by the same.



observation of many others, and had been
 frequently noticed by the attending physicians
 of the Pennsylvania Almshouse, before the
 statement of the French writer, Bretonneau
 had been received. Some have divided ulcer
 of the intestines into distinct classes -
 the one perhaps mostly comprehensive
 is the following. (1831) 1st into the villous, confined
 to the villi of the mucous coat, 2nd into the follic-
 ular confined to the mucous follicles - 3rd Into
 the patched or laminated, which might include
 both the others. 4th into the pustular, confined
 to the glands of Brunner and Peyer.
 The existence of ulcers in the stomach and bowels
 tends evidently to confirm the belief the locality
 of disease, and how vastly necessary it is to
 remove the local affection, before the fever, which
 is entirely dependant on this local affection
 can be removed. when the disease has run



18.

into the ulcerative stage it has been doubted by some whether it
could be relieved, or permanently cured by our remedies, yet on
hope, that with a proper management, with ^{the} mildest and
most soothing remedies it may be relieved; but at the same time
are inclined to believe, that it leaves the bowels in a situation
more susceptible of disease. It will be perceived that my rem-
arks have been altogether doubtful, stating rather what I have
learned from experience than what I have gathered from other
sources. I would not be understood, by any means, to have detracted
an iota from the value of purgatives, in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~any~~ other diseases to
which they ^{are} applicable; but believing as I do, that there is a
stage in which they are inapplicable, and hurtful, I have
thought myself justifiable in affirming it; at the same time
I should do injustice to my feelings, were I not to admit, that
the source from which I derived my first impressions
has served greatly to strengthen my predilection in favor
of the doctrine, inasmuch as it was taught by physicians
highly eminent, both as teachers and practitioners
of medicine.

